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AUTHOR Johnson, Patricia
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ABSTRACT

A pilot study of discourse in a practicum reading class for instruction in English as a second language examines miscommunication between non-native English speakers. Teachers and their students read transcripts of episodes from classroom discussions and wrote line-by-line analyses of what they understood was being said. Similarities and differences in interlocutors' interpretations of one episode indicate that miscommunication occurred in 23 percent of the instances of coherent interactive discourse. The apparent coherence of the discourse even seemed to increase miscommunication because interlocutors assumed that they understood each other and did not attempt alternative ways to comunicate or interpret verbal messages. Although spoken utterances were relevant to the topic of discourse, specific linguistic cues for comprehension were often lacking. For example, lack of elaboration and paraphrase in the teacher's explanation of the sociocultural connotation of a word resulted in the misunderstanding of students who seemed to equate this word with a similar expression and its implications according to their own culturally determined knowledge. This study provides insight into cultural effects on the perception of verbal messages, sociocultural inferences in conversation, communication strategy in interactive discourse, and linguistic and extralinguistic contexts of utterances. (Author/MSE)

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Analysis of Discourse in a TESL Practicum Class

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This analysis of classroom discourse attempts to examine the process of conversational inference in interactions of non-native English speakers. Subjects read the transcript of a discourse in which they had participated in an English as a second language class and wrote what they understood was meant by each speaker. These interpretations of the utterances by the interlocutors are used as a means to make more explicit the unverbalized perceptions and presuppositions which underlie comprehension of verbal exchange. As Gumperz (1982) found with native English speakers of different cultural backgrounds, varying interpretations of utterances by non-native English speakers and naturally occurring instances of miscommunication are found in passages of apparently successful verbal communication. In addition, knowledge learned from past experiences in the language and sociocultural situations is used in conversational inference. However, when non-native English speakers lack specific socioculturally determined contextualization cues and related communicative conventions in discourse for inference of meaning, they seem to have more difficulty in initiating and sustaining the conversational involvement that leads to communication.

(This paper was presented at the TESOL 1984 conference in Houston, Texas.)

Patricia Johnson
University of Wisconsin - Green Bay

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The process of interpretation of verbal messages depends not only on the interlocutors' knowledge of the language but also on their knowledge of the sociocultural values associated with the verbal components of a message. This study of the discourse of non-native English speakers attempts to examine the process by which second language learners interpret verbal utterances and make inferences for comprehension. This analysis of discourse is based on the theory of conversational inference developed by the sociolinguist, John J. Gumperz.

Gumperz systematically demonstrates in his studies of the discourse of native English speakers how background knowledge is used in situational interpretations of verbal messages (1976, 1977, 1981, 1982, 1984). "Contextualization cues" (1982: 130-152) are identified as the verbal and nonverbal means by which speakers signal how an utterance relates to what precedes or follows and how semantic content is to be understood and interpreted by listeners. These contextualization cues are found in the speakers' verbal signals (i.e., choice of semantic items and formulaic expressions, coreference, paraphrase, repetition, elaboration); nonverbal signals (i.e., gaze direction, proxemic distance, and kinesic rhythm or timing of body motion and gestures); and paralinguistic signals (i.e., voice, pitch, and rhythm). Contextualization cues are covert, highly context bound, and learned subconsciously through prolonged and intensive face-to-face contact under conditions allowing maximum feedback (e.g., in home and peer settings). Thus, contextualization cues reflect a common sociocultural background. For example, Gumperz' research (1982: 172-186) indicates differences in contextualization cues used by speakers of West Indian English, British English, and American English.

"Converstional inference" of meaning in verbal exchanges (Gumperz, 1982: 153-171) is the perception of contextualization cues, followed by a search for an interpretation that makes sense in terms of what has been

perceived and what is known from past experience in the language and in sociocultural situations. Thus, the ability to match message meaning with contextualization cues is learned from previous interactive experience in the language and forms part of a person's instinctive knowledge of the language.

In addition, an utterance is interpreted according to the listeners' comprehension of the situation or context at the time of the interaction in terms of a schema or a familiar frame of background sociocultural knowledge. Bartlett (1932) first defined the concept of schema as an organizing principle in interpreting events in oral stories. As new knowledge is added in discourse, relevant background knowledge or schema for comprehension changes. Thus, as schema is active and developing, interpretations of a verbal utterance reflect a dynamic process as interlocutors interact. According to Gumperz (1982: 171), successful interpretations of an utterance depend on what happens in the interactive exchange itself, i.e., the extent to which context bound inferences are shared, reinforced, modified, or rejected in the course of the exchange. Thus, the conditions that make a speaker's desired interpretation possible are established through this interaction of interlocutors.

Successful or unsuccessful perception and usage of contextualizsation cues depend on the communicative competence of the interlocutors. For Gumperz, communicative competence is "the knowledge of linguistic and related communicative conventions (contextualization cues) that speakers must have to initiate and sustain conversational involvement" (1981: 324). This conversational involvement leads to comprehension and communication.

Retrospective interpretations of utterances can give hypotheses about the actual contextualization cues processed by the interlocutors and the range of alternative interpretations of an utterance. In Garfinkle's study of the interpretative processes which underlie communicative acts, meaning

and intelligibility of discourse is defined as "situated meaning", i.e.,"meaning constructed in specific sociocultural contexts by actors who must actively interpret what they hear for it to make sense" (1972: 302). Garfinkle asked subjects to fill out the sketchiness of what was said by writing what they understood they had been talking about. What was actually said was therefore treated as an incomplete version of what was meant. This method of retrospective interpretation of the written transcript of oral discourse by interlocutors seems to be one of the few ways to document with some degree of confidence the interlocutors' comprehension of discourse.

Focus of Study

This analysis of discourse is an attempt to examine the nature of the inferential processes of second language learners in verbal interaction in small group discussion. Specifically, the question of how these non-native English speakers infer the meaning of a verbal utterance is addressed through an examination of their perception of contextualization cues. This perception is indicated in the usage of language in their own utterances and their written interpretations of their own utterances and the utterances of others in the discourse. Thus, their retrospective interpretations of utterances are used as a means to make more explicit the unverbalized perceptions and presuppositions which underlie their understanding of verbal exchange.

Subjects and Data Collection

The classroom discourse examined in this study was taken from a teaching practicum class in English as a Second Language. The student teachers, non-native speakers of English, had no classroom teaching experience. The other interlocutors were either university undergraduates with a minimum of 525 TOEFL scores or non-native English speakers from the community with equivalent proficiency in English. Subjects took the

course voluntarily to improve their oral communication skills. The interloctors in the discourse examined in this study represent various cultures: the teacher was from Japan; the three female students from Chile, Venezuela, and Poland; and the male student from Saudi Arabia. Their average age was twenty.

The class was divided into small groups of students, each with a student teacher as discussion leader. Although the discussion was impromptu for the improvement of oral communication skills, the topic depended on the teacher's choice of specific lines from a dialogue in an ESL reading textbook. After the lesson, subjects were asked to read the transcript of the recorded verbal exchange and write what they had understood was being said by each speaker. If the subjects interpreted what was said as a complete version of what was meant, they wrote nothing. None of the subjects read the interpretations of the discourse by the others. This method of interpretation of the written transcript of oral discourse through retrospection was adapted from the research of Garfinkle (1972).

The discourse analyzed in this report was chosen as an example of discourse interpretations in this ESL classroom because of its brevity. The analysis of the topic of discourse precedes the analysis of the transcribed verbal interaction and interpretations of the interlocutors. The analysis of the discourse transcript is followed by a discussion on the findings of this pilot study and the use of the design of this study as a model for further research.

Topic Analysis of Discourse

One of the objectives of the authors Bodman and Lanzano in the textbook (No Hot Water Tonight) is to present realistic aspects of situations in American society not usually included in ESL reading texts. The vocabulary is not carefully controlled, as the dialogues contain words

considered necessary for coping with daily life in urban America. Therefore, students of other backgrounds can be predicted from research in reading comprehension (Johnson, 1981, 1982) to have difficulties in interpreting the culturally determined connotations of the language and the interpersonal relationships as portrayed in the Bodman and Lanzano text.

The topic of discourse is based on specific lines of text dialogue judged by the student teacher to contain problematic linguistic items crucial to full comprehension of the interpersonal relationships portrayed in a dialogue in the textbook. The introduction to the dialogue proposes a schema representing a stereotyped situation for the native speaker of English.

> The next dialogue is a conversation between two young men in a bar. What do young men usually have conversations about? (About girls? About baseball? About what?) Read the following dialogue to see what these two men are talking about on this Friday night at the bar in Irene's. (No Hot Water Tonight, p. 87)

Understanding this introduction to the dialogue may provoke one or more schemata of a bar. However, the title for the dialogue (Let's Find Some Girls) implies a bar where men and women can meet and become acquainted with one another. Schema images are rendered more specific by a line drawing of Irene's bar which illustrates, from the perspective of the bartender, men and women talking at a bar and, in the background, a band with other people standing and talking or sitting at tables. Thus, relevant background knowledge is given to ESL readers who may have alternative schemata for culturally specific situations where men and women can meet each other.

The following dialogue lines were selected for discussion by the teacher who believed that the sociocultural connotation of chicks would not

be understood by the students and that comprehension of this linguistic item was essential to their understanding of the dialogue.

Man #1 Hey! Look at those two beautiful girls at the bar.

Man #2 Wow! They're good-looking chicks.

Man #1 Let's go.

Readers must be able to integrate internal cohesive links in the text to understand these dialogue lines. They must understand that they and chicks in the second dialogue line refer grammatically and semantically to girls in the preceding line. In addition, readers must be able to relate the content of the text to their own knowledge of the world. They must be able to link the word chicks to pertinent sociocultural information outside the text as appropriate language for two men who are looking for women in a bar. (Both strategies of the analysis of language for text cohesion and of concepts for text coherence exemplify theoretical models of text processing; see Rumelhart, 1977, for a model taking into account both strategies.)

Text Analysis of Discourse

The discourse begins with the teacher's introduction of the topic of discussion and includes all subsequent exchanges until idea units no longer pertain to the topic. Much conversational space consists of the teacher trying to establish through questioning that in this context, the vocabulary word chicks is used in its figurative or sociocultural connotative sense. The teacher's questioning to provoke conversation about the text was a common technique to elicit conversation in this oral communication class.

In the classroom discourse in Figure 1, each student (S) is identified by number. The symbol (Ss) refers to a simultaneous response by the students to the teacher (T) or to each other. Unusual stress or mispronunciation of words, head gestures, and other behavior which accompanies discourse have been omitted because the analysis of this data is in terms of the

interpretation of the verbal meaning of the utterances for the interlocutors. The utterances are numbered consecutively and separated by a broken line from the interlocutors' verbatim written interpretations of utterance meanings and by a solid line from the next utterance in the discourse. Only grammar and spelling errors have been corrected.

In the first section of the dialogue (Figure 2), examination of the utterances and their interpretations reveals that speakers assume that meaning is shared with listeners. Thus, they do not attempt alternative ways through contextualization cues (paraphrase and expansion of utterances) to further clarify meaning.

The teacher's question (line 1) lacks coreferential cues for students to understand if she is asking for the literal or referential meaning of chicks. However, her interpretation (line 1) indicates that she is asking for the literal meaning. Her paraphrase of the implicit meaning of the passage (line 1) leads to misunderstanding of her question, as indicated by S1's interpretation (line 2). S2 responds to S1's comment (line 2) by giving the reference of chicks to girls (lines 5, 7). S2's clarification of his reply to S1 (line 9), as indicated by his interpretation of this line, seems to be a result of the teacher's repetition of S2's answer in the form of a question (line 8). However, the teacher may be actually confirming S2's explanation of the reference of chicks to girls in the form of a question. Although S2 seems to understand that chicks is linked cohesively to girls in the text (line 5), his interpretation of the teacher's question (line 10) indicates that he does not infer the teacher's sociocultural meaning for chicks as posed in her questions (lines 8, 10) and indicated by her interpretations (lines 7, 8, 10).

The teacher's paraphrase of the implicit meaning of the passage (line 1), repetition of S2's answer in the form of question (line 8), and indirect questioning (line 10) exemplify her usage of the language to signal how the

semantic content of chicks, as indicated by her interpretation of these lines, is to be understood and interpreted by the students. The students, however, do not infer the meaning signalled by the teacher, as can be seen by their responses and interpretations of her utterances. They interpret her verbal contextualization cues (paraphrase, repetition, indirect questioning) in terms of what they know from past experience in the language and in sociocultural situations.

The teacher's use of questions to lead the students indirectly to the meaning of chicks seems to be based on the following assumptions. Students would use their knowledge of the language to infer the referential meaning of chicks as girls from the sentence context (T's interpretation of line 2). They would use their schema for a bar setting to infer the sociocultural meaning of chicks (T's interpretations of lines 8, 10).

The teacher's realization that students are not able to infer the meaning of chicks through analysis of reference to girls is exemplified by her interjections of ok and yeah, indicating agreement to give an explanation in answer to their questions (lines 3, 6). However, her brief one word explanations lack contextualization cues for students to understand how chicks refers to girls. The teacher could have established conditions through explanation or questions to lead students to understand how chicks refers grammatically and semantically to girls in the text dialogue.

In the following segment of the discourse (Figure 3), S3 ignores the teacher's question for an explanation of the sociocultural connotation of chicks (line 10) and requests another explanation of the reference of chicks to girls in the context of the sentence.

The teacher briefly answers S3's requests for another explanation of the reference of chicks (lines 12, 14), assuming that students are able to infer the meaning of chicks from the sentence context (line 14). At the same

time, she persists on the derogatory implication of chicks (lines 14, 16). The teacher's interpretations (lines 15, 16) indicate her inference from S3's question if chicks is slang (line 15) and that S3 understands the sociocultural meaning of chicks. However, S3 does not understand this connotation, as indicated by her interpretation of why she would not want to be called a chick (line 17). Unlike the teacher, S1, who is of the same general culture and language background as S3, seems to infer that S3 does not understand the referential or sociocultural meaning of chicks (line 17).

The teacher's strategy of not verbalizing explicitly the point that she is trying to make results in a lack of contextualization cues in her utterances (lines 14, 16) which would enable students to infer the sociocultural meaning of chicks. For example, if she had clarified why chicks has a derogatory connotation as a reference to women, the conditions for comprehension and acceptance of this interpretation could have been established through the interaction.

In addition, the teacher implies that chick would be used in direct address (line 16) and the students infer this social usage of this word. For the rest of the discourse, the teacher and the students do not make a distinction between people using chicks among themselves in talking about a subject and in addressing a person directly.

In the following segment of the discourse (Figure 4), interpretations of silence resemble context-bound judgments based on the interlocutors' former experiences in communication, either in English or in their first languages. The teacher infers from the students' silence that they do not understand the sociocultural meaning of chicks and thus, she has been unable to persuade them to accept her interpretation of chicks. The students' silence or failure to respond as she had expected them to do is also interpreted by the teacher in attitudinal terms as expecting too much

from students (line 18). After this last question, the teacher makes no more attempts to question students about this meaning of chicks. SI interprets the silence as a signal that students do not comprehend the teacher's sociocultural meaning for chicks. In addition, SI understands but does not accept this derogatory meaning of chicks (line 19).

In the following discourse segment (Figure 5), the teacher changes strategies for teaching the sociocultural connotation of chicks and asks students to give equivalent expressions for chicks in their first languages. Students infer that the teacher wants to know an equivalent expression for chicks in Spanish while the teacher is actually asking for the meaning of this Spanish expression in English. This miscommunication could be caused by a lack of coreferential contextualization cues (reference, elaboration) for students to understand the teacher's questions (lines 20, 22, 24). SI seems to infer that the teacher is asking if the meaning of such expressions is derogatory (line 22) and delays in answering the teacher's questions. She finally gives an example from her past cultural experience of a similar word in reference to a woman in Spanish, turkey (line 29).

In the last segment of the discourse (Figure 6), interlocutors seem to have found a common base of experience on which to build interaction. The smoothly moving exchanges seem to indicate the achievement and maintenance of mutual comprehension and agreement in the discourse. However, there are alternative interpretations of utterances. For example, in response to the teacher's question if she would feel bad if someone called her a turkey (line 30), S3 states: "You know . . . not in Spanish. Maybe in English if someone calls you a turkey" (line 31). Examination of the interpretations of this utterance illustrates the interlocutors' varying interpretations as they infer meaning from the discourse preceding this utterance to fill in what is not said by S3. The teacher infers that the

meaning of turkey has changed to a favorable connotation for woman in Spanish. S1 infers that S3 now fully understands the meaning of the word chick that the teacher has taught, and S4 infers that the use of turkey for a woman in Spanish is an expression of love.

An examination of the interpretations of utterances reveals that the students have understood but failed to accept the sociocultural connotation of chicks as presented by the teacher. S1 and S3 seem to equate this word with a similar expression and its implication in their own cultural context (lines 19, 23, 30, 31). S2's interpretation of the teacher's utterance (line 10) and subsequent silence for the rest of the discourse and S4's interpretation of the discourse utterances (lines 31, 36, 37, 38) also seem to indicate comprehension but nonacceptance of the teacher's sociocultural meaning for chicks. As the teacher does not provide relevant background information, conditions that would have made her desired interpretation acceptable to the students are not established through contextualization cues in the interaction. Thus, students' interpretations of the teacher's utterances have been matched with what is known from past sociocultural experiences.

Although her questions had been prepared before class, the teacher was very hesitant in introducing the topic (line 1). Moreover, a superficial understanding of the connotation of chicks which she was trying to teach is indicated by her explanation of why such expressions as chick no longer have a derogatory meaning (lines 29, 31), her expression of concern for the feelings of women when called turkey (line 30), her statement that there are no such expressions for women in her native language, Japanese (line 35), and her positive reaction to similar terms for women in Polish (lines 37, 39). Although the teacher pointed out later that her interpretation of chicks had been given her by an American female friend, she seemed not to realize that this word may not be considered derogatory or disrespectful of women by all native speakers of English, as she seems to assume, and that the use of the word chicks may be limited to specific situations.

Discussion

The findings of this study on the interaction of non-native English speakers generally concur with those of Gumperz for native English speakers. Communicative experience in the language and sociocultural situations provide background knowledge which is used in conversational inference by native and non-native English speakers. Thus, individual differences in background knowledge might cause instances of miscommunication to occur naturally in passages of apparently successful verbal interaction.

Using communicative strategies successfully is a result of the amount of intensive verbal interactive experience in the language with native or proficient non-native speakers. However, non-native English speakers' difficulties in using communicative strategies may prevent them from entering into verbal contact with native English speakers and eliciting the type of feedback necessary to learn to understand and use contextualization cues for successful communication in the language. A similar discourse analysis of a native English speaking teacher able to use contextualization cues effectively in interaction with non-native English speakers might reveal how contextualization cues are actually acquired by ESL learners for discourse comprehension.

In addition, non-native English speakers' misuse or lack of knowledge of contextualization cues in the language may make it difficult for them to intiate and sustain conversational involvement which leads to communication. The teacher in this study seems to be aware of difficulties in explaining the meaning of a word and persuading the students to accept this interpretation. However, she may be unaware that such difficulties in communication have a linguistic basis: how to respond to a student's utterance, how to introduce a topic, how to elaborate on a point, or how to present information in order to make clear to the class what she is trying to

point out about text material. Her lack of communicative competence in the English language may make it difficult for her to find alternative ways of encoding and to recognize the need for re-encoding the meaning that she wishes to convey. The teacher's inability to use contextualization cues (e.g., coreference, elaboration) in her language to aid students to make inferences for comprehension may have been caused by her own lack of much previous intensive interactive experience in the language with native speakers of English. In addition, her difficulties in communication with her students may have been caused by inexperience in the classroom.

In making genralizations from this analysis of discourse, it is important to note that there are weaknesses in the procedure of the interpretation of utterances through written retrospection of the interlocutors. Phonetic and stylistic contextualization cues that interlocutors also rely on in face-to-face conversation for inference of meaning were not examined because of the transitory nature of such cues which would be forgotten easily in later written recall. Moreover, interlocutors might have remembered imperfectly what they actually understood at the time that the discourse took place. They also might not have stated their complete comprehension of an utterance in writing. An oral interview questioning technique might have given more data on the range of interpretation of utterances and the actual cues processed. However, this technique might have unintentionally led interlocutors to different interpretations than those they actually had. Interpretation of utterances through written retrospection does allow for investigation of aspects of verbal interaction which external observation can not assess.

This pilot study seems to indicate that the ability to match verbal contextualization cues with message meaning is necessary for the communicative competence of non-native English speakers who would like to participate meaningfully in verbal encounters. However, more data based studies of verbal interaction in more varied situations could reveal more about the inferential processes of second language learners.

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FIGURE 1

1. T What ... ok ... what do . what does it mean by they're looking for chicks? What . . . what's chicks?
2. S1 Chicks . . . chicks . . . chicks? I don't know.
3. T Ok. Chickens.
4. S1 The word chicks comes from chickens?
5. S2 Girls.
6. T Yeah. Girls.
7. S2 Good-looking girls.
8. T So . . . you say that beautiful girls are called chicks?
9. S2 No, the girls. All the girls.
10. T All the girls chicks . . . Do they respect girls by saying they are chicks?
11. S3 I don't know what they mean . . . they are good-looking chicks.
12. T They are good-looking girls . . . chicks refer to girls.
13. S3 chicks comes from chicks?

    Ss (laughter)
14. T Yes . . . how do you feel?
15. S3 It's slang?
16. T Um hm. Is it good slang? When you are called chick, how do you feel?
17. S3 I don't like it if someone call me chick.

    Ss (laughter)
18. T You don't like it . . . so . . . do you think these men respect girls?

    Ss (silence)

    No, they don't . . . You didn't like this expression? . . .

    Right? . . . So you wouldn't like this.

    Ss (silence)

    Don't you think they look down on girls by calling them chicks?

19. S1 No. In my country, we also have this expression but we don't mind.

20. T Could you tell me about that?

21. S1 No. It's in Spanish.

22. T What does it mean?

23. S1 They also have expressions. Young boys to call girls or girls to call boys. And we don't mind. We are used to it.

24. T Um hm. Yeah. What are they? How do . . . how do boys call girls?

25. S1 It's the same thing like you say.

26. T So . . . they call them animals?

27. S1 Yeah, mostly.

28. T What animal?

29. S1 Turkey.
Ss (laughter)

30. T Turkey! So you don't feel bad if someone calls you a turkey?

31. S3 You know . . . not in Spanish. Maybe in English if someone calls you a turkey.

32. S4 In Spanish, it's very sweet.

33. T Do you have any kind of expression like this in your country? . . . No? How about you . . . You don't know?

34. S4 How about you?

35. T Um. I don't know. We don't have that kind of expression. How about you?

36. S4 We have pussy cat.

37. T Pussy cat! That's sweet.

38. S4 Or rabbit.

39. T Wow! That's cute.

FIGURE 2

---

1. T What...ok...What do...What does it mean by they're looking for chicks? What...What's chicks?

- -

T - I discussed meaning of chicks from the sentence first, helping students to know or realize what chicks are because I thought some students didn't know the literal meaning of chicks.

---

2. S1 Chicks...chicks...chicks? I don't know.

- -

S1 - T said: they were looking for chicks (line 1) not as the text said: they were good-looking chicks.

T - S1 might have know what chicks literally means, but maybe she just didn't know what it implied.

---

3. T Ok. Chickens.

- -

S1 - T answers the question of S1 (line 2) without a more detailed explanation. T thought that was enough and all the students would understand immediately the meaning of chickens. But textually T said that chicks means the animal chicken. Just that.

S2 - T was trying to tell the class about what is the meaning of chick.

---

4. S1 The word chicks comes from chickens?

---

5. S2 Girls.

- -

T - I think S2 knew what chicks meant already before T said what chicken means from the context (line 6).

---

6. T Yeah. Girls.

---

7. S2 Good looking girls.

- -

S2 - What I say all the girls it refers to good looking girls.

T - S2 doesn't interpret or understand the sarcastic implication toward girls behind this meaning of chicks.

S1 - S2 also answers the question of S1 but gives a further explanation of what chicks means.

---

8. T So...you say that beautiful girls are called chicks?

- -

T - I suggest or lead students to the idea that chicks is not a respectful way to call girls.

S1 - So the T tries to clarify the answer of S2 by asking a new question.

---

9. S2 No, the girls, all the girls.

- -

S2 - All the girls including ugly-looking.

T - S2 didn't still understand T's purpose (line 8).

---

10. T All the girls chicks...Do they respect girls by saying they are chicks?

- -

T - I try to make S2 notice the way of looking at girls of guys in a bar was looking down on girls.

S2 - Yes because chickens are sweet and nice animals.

FIGURE 3

---

11. S3 I don't know what they mean . . . they are good-looking chicks.

- -

S3. - I really didn't know what the word chicks means. That is the reason I asked the teacher what it means.

T - S3 didn't understand this expression at all. Of course, S3 didn't notice the implication of this chicks. She might not have known the word chicks, not knowing the relationship between words chicken and chick.

S1 - The meaning of chicks is not clear for S3.

---

12. T They are good-looking girls . . . chicks refer to girls.

---

13. S3 Chicks comes from chickens?

Ss (laughter)

- -

T - S3 still didn't know the relation between chicks and chickens.

---

14. T Yes . . . how do you feel?

- -

T - I expected all students to understand the literal meaning and implication of chicks.

---

15. S3 It's slang?

- -

T - S3 began to notice the disrespectful expression of chicks towards girls, because for S3 slang means something bad.

---

16. T Um hm. Is it good slang? When you are called chick, how do you feel?

T - I'm trying to make S3 understand the implication asking how she feels when she's called chicks, expecting she wouldn't feel good.

17. S3 I don't like it if someone call me chick.

Ss (laughter)

S3 - But when you don't know an expression or what the expression means, you feel confused about it, and you don't like it because you don't know what a guy tries to say.

S1 - S3 answers now, thinking that the meaning of chicks is chickens (animal), in reaction to T's question.

FIGURE 4

18. T You don't like it . . . so . . . do you think these men respect girls?
Ss (silence)

T - I expect now students to understand the meaning and implication of chicks and refer back to the men's attitude towards girls to make students understand the usage and implications of chicks in this context.

18. T No, they don't . . . You didn't like this expression . . . Right? . . . So you wouldn't like this.
Ss (silence)

S1 - T answers her own question where she says no, they don't. Then in the next sentence she answers for the students and confirms it. There is silence because the full meaning of the word is not understood yet.

18. T Don't you think they look down on girls by calling them chicks?

T - I'm expecting too much from students to understand why the men called them chicks as students didn't get chicks in this context.

S1 - T reaffirms again that chicks is a bad word.

19. S1 No. In my country, we also have this expression but we don't mind.

S1 - I explain that these words are not necessarily bad words.

FIGURE 5

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20. T Could you tell me about that?

- -

T - I expect student to explain the literal meaning and implication of the word.

S1 - T wants to know the word itself.

---

21. S1 No. It's in Spanish.

- -

T - S1 thinks that teacher can't understand because it's Spanish and because it's their own usage so that outside people can't understand.

---

22. T What does it mean?

- -

T - I expect students to tell me what it literally means, restating line 18.

S1 - What does the expression mean? Are they bad words?

---

23. S1 They also have expressions. Young boys to call girls or girls to call boys. And we don't mind. We are used to it.

- -

S1 - These are just expressions, young boys' talk.

---

24. T Um hm. Yeah. What are they? How do . . . how do boys call girls?

- -

T - Restatement of question in line 20.

S1 - T wants to know the word, no matter if it is in Spanish or any language. Just the word.

---

25. S1 It's the same thing like you say.

S1 - I think that T wants to know only the meaning of the word, even though S1 has not yet clarified the meaning of the word in Spanish.

---

26. T So . . . they call them animals?

T - I got what it means, but wanted to know the literal meaning, not only the implication and the usage.

S1 - T assumes that definitely chickens means only animals, or all the words that usually the boys or girls call each other are animal names.

---

27. S1 Yeah, mostly.

---

28. T What animal?

T - I expect some kind of animal because chickens, turkeys, and those animal names are not respectful words to call girls in most cultures.

---

29. S1 Turkey.

Ss (laughter)

- -

T - In S1's culture, men constantly call girls turkey and maybe it implied disrespect for girls originally. But girls get too used to be called turkey. So for S1 it didn't mean anything bad for guys to call girls turkey. So for her it was hard to understand chicks meant something bad towards girls.

FIGURE 6

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30. T Turkey! So you don't feel bad if someone calls you a turkey?

- -

T - I make sure that S1 and S3 don't feel bad about being called turkey.

S3 - When the teacher explained to me, I compared it with an expression in Spanish which has almost the same meaning. This word is turkey (in Spanish: pava). Now I know both words and their meaning; I know these words are not an insult. It's just a popular way to say this is a nice girl or a pretty girl.

S4 - I think that T tries to show us that we have some feelings connected with words in our native language. But we don't have yet the same connections in English. Some words in English, precisely their meanings are strange for us. So first we should not only learn new words, but also we should find their emotional meaning and feeling connected with them.

---

31. S3 You know . . . not in Spanish. Maybe in English if someone calls you a turkey.

- -

S3 - Now if someone calls me turkey in Spanish, I don't care about it because I know that this person don't try to insult me. I don't feel bad. Probably in English if someone call you a turkey is because he/she try to fool you or try to insult you. I don't know exactly so I feel bad because this person try to insult me. After this discussion, I like to ask this person what he/she means when call me turkey.

T - In Spanish for her the meaning or the usage of turkey is changing to good as a general meaning for girls, because language is always changing.

S1 - Here the meaning of the word chicks is fully understood by S3, in reaction to T.

S4 - If someone call you a turkey (in Spanish) it means that he/she likes you, loves you. You can compare this expression with English darling or my sweetheart, etc. You use this expression not for labeling girls, but to make your sentences more nice, sweet.

---

32. S4 In Spanish, it's very sweet.

Ss (laughter)

- -

S1 - S4 also understood completely the meaning of words like chicks or turkey and explains that in Spanish it is not a bad word.

---

33. T Do you have any kind of expression like this in your country? . . . No? How about you . . . You don't know?

---

34. S4 How about you?

---

35. T Um. I don't know. We don't have that kind of expression. How about you?

---

36. S4 We have pussy cat.

- -

S4 - In Poland we have a similar expression. When we would like to be nice, to say something nice for people we like (for instance - a husband to a wife, a boyfriend to a girlfriend), we use this expression - pussy cat.

37. T Pussy cat, that's sweet.

T - For me pussy cat sounds cute personally, because I have a good image about pussy cat.

S4 - I think that the teacher likes this expression because it compares people with an animal that we like, that is very nice, sweet, little, warm, cute.

38. S4 Or rabbit.

S4 - There is another expression in Poland: rabbit. This expression may have the same meaning as English chicks. But it doesn't mean that boys don't respect girls. It is simply synonymous for girls in slang. Sometimes boys call their girlfriends rabbits. In this case it has a nice meaning (as baby in English). But it is impossible for a husband to call his wife rabbit (because a husband should show respect for his wife and this expression shows only feeling among young people without respect).

39. T Wow, that's cute.

T - I only personally like rabbit ignoring the implication of the word rabbit. Actually my cat's name is Rabit.